

# NASA Status Report

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

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## **X-43A MISHAP INVESTIGATION UPDATE**

The board investigating the June 2 X-43A mission loss continues to meet at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center at Edwards, Calif. Root cause of the mishap has not yet been found.

Robert W. Hughes, chairman of the investigation board, said the team at Dryden expects to join other team members already at the Orbital Sciences Corp. facility in Chandler, Ariz., by June 24. That is where the Pegasus booster rocket used with the X-43A was built.

The investigation board has released the NASA B-52B mother ship as well as NASA Dryden's control rooms for other duties, Hughes said. These assets had been isolated since the mishap to permit the board to study them in detail.

The X-43A mission, first in a series of three, was lost moments after the X-43A and its Pegasus booster rocket were released from the wing of the B-52 carrier aircraft. After Pegasus rocket ignition, the combined booster and X-43A deviated from its flight path. It was then deliberately terminated with an explosive charge, causing the X-43A and Pegasus to fall into a cleared Navy sea range off the coast of California.

The X-43A is designed to be the first scramjet-powered vehicle, capable of attaining speeds as high as Mach 10.

NASA's Langley Research Center at Hampton, Va., leads the X-43A program, with flight operations conducted by NASA Dryden. Microcraft, Inc., of Tullahoma, Tenn., built the 12-foot-long X-43A vehicle. The mishap investigation team includes representatives from NASA centers including Dryden, Langley, Marshall (Alabama), Goddard (Maryland), Kennedy (Florida), plus all of the contractor elements.

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